

VZCZCXRO8148  
PP RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHLB #1775 1561541  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 051541Z JUN 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3837  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 001775

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS/WERNER/DORAN/SINGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/05/2016

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: MGLE01: KARAME RALLY REVEALS OPENING OF A NEW/OLD  
ANTI-GOVERNMENT FRONT IN LEBANON

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador. Reason: Section 1.4 (b).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On June 3, a political gauntlet was thrown down during a rally marking the anniversary of the 1987 death of a prominent Sunni figure in northern Lebanon. Omar Karame, former Prime minister and friend to Syria, was joined by several ex-deputies, and followers of anti-Hariri forces, in commemorating the assassination of his brother Rashid. The rally, in the Karame home town of Tripoli, moved quickly from a solemn memorial to vehement attacks on the government and especially the March 14 politician Samir Ja'ja'. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Two traditional leaders of northern Lebanon, Omar Karame and Suleiman Franjieh, came together this weekend to mark the 1987 death of Karame's brother, Prime Minister Rashid Karame. Rashid Karame was killed by a bomb planted in his official helicopter. The act has been attributed to the Lebanese Forces/Phalange movement leaders, headed by Samir Ja'ja'. Karame has been consistent in his condemnation of Ja'ja', objecting to the Christian militia leader's release from prison in 2005. At the ceremonies for his brother, Karame again took on this issue, calling Ja'ja's government pardon invalid and demanding justice for his brother.

¶3. (SBU) Karame was joined at the June 3 rally by a collection of Lebanese who have come to represent those still loyal to Syria and opposed to the Siniora government. Among those present were Mohamed Raad, of Hizballah; Talal Arslan, Walid Jumblatt's less powerful competitor for Druze power; Elie Ferzli, frequent apologist for Syria; and Suleiman Franjieh, powerful northern Christian who blames Ja'ja' for the civil war era murders of his family. MP Abbas Hashem represented Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic movement. Aoun himself did not attend. Some ten thousand supporters surrounded the leadership of the anti-Hariri forces.

¶4. (SBU) Karame, with a friendly audience in front of him, quickly turned his words from those of mourning to a polemic against the present government and its leadership. He took direct aim at Samir Ja'ja', calling for his imprisonment for murder, and denouncing his 2005 pardon as the work of a non-representative parliament. Karame went on to praise the "resistance," demanding Sunni support for Hizballah's continued role as an armed force. Anyone calling for a review of the role of the resistance, according to Karame, was a foreign agent.

¶5. (C) Karame's speech was followed by several others in the same vein. The speakers blamed U.S. and French policies for destabilizing Lebanon. They bashed the government of Fouad Siniora and the majority led by Saad Hariri. Their message was that the north, both Christian and Sunni, was

betrayed by the elections and the majority that arose from those elections. The north, they said, has been ignored by the international community and victimized by the west. "If the elections were held today, Omar Karame would win the north," Suleiman Franjieh announced to the crowd in Karame's home town of Tripoli.

16. (C) Comment: The speakers at the commemoration were those who lost status and position with the rise of Saad Hariri and his majority. The Karame event was a show of solidarity among disaffected losers. All the leaders who gathered to commemorate Rashid Karame will join together in a political movement, to be declared officially later this week. Franjieh will announce the formation of his own political party on June 11. Because of their past affiliation with Syria, this group will inevitably be called "pro-Syrian" in Lebanon's political discourse. But their real motivations seem much more egocentric. They are more anti-Hariri than they are pro-anything. The conciliatory words aimed at Hizballah from a prominent Sunni must have been crafted, in part, to pull away from Saad Hariri those Shia who still support him. End comment.

FELTMAN